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THE EFFECTIVE USE OF VOLUNTEERS IN USAID ECONOMIC GROWTH PROGRAMS TECHNICAL BRIEF NO. 5



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Introduction

USAID and its service providers have developed approaches to selecting and managing the human resources required to ensure optimal program results. The roles, responsibilities and value of paid professional staff and consultants are well understood by program planners and managers. The advantages of utilizing business volunteers (pro bono practitioners and industry-specific technical experts) to implement USAID economic growth programs are not as well understood.

This technical brief is intended to highlight the significant benefits and sustainable impacts that can be achieved by utilizing integrated teams of volunteer business practitioners and industry-specific technical experts, in conjunction with paid resident and short-term consultants to implement economic growth programs.

44 % or 83.9 million American adults volunteer, representing the equivalent of over 9 million full-time employees at a value of \$239 billion.
<http://independentsector.org/>

1. The Evolution of Business Volunteer Organizations

1.1 Origins of the International Business Volunteer Programs

In 1964, the first international business volunteer organization was created as a “businessmen’s Peace Corps” and funded under a grant from a then relatively young (1961) U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The goal of the new international volunteer organization was to improve America’s reputation abroad by promoting economic growth and better understanding between the United States and developing countries by deploying retired U.S. executives and technical experts to work with small- and medium-sized businesses in less-developed nations during short-term, one-on-one assistance assignments.

Over succeeding years, the success of the initial program and the need to meet an ever-increasing demand for economic development assistance around the world spawned more similarly dedicated international business volunteer organizations both in the U.S. and overseas. To date, tens of thousands of seasoned professionals, representing virtually every sector of the economy, private and public, have volunteered their time to assist micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, financial institutions, government entities as well as private and public sector business support organizations in more than 140 countries worldwide.

1.2 Responding to the Challenges of a Changing Development Environment

Just as development needs have changed since 1964, so have the profiles of the men and women currently registered with business volunteer organizations to serve overseas on an economic growth programs. From 1964 to the early 1980s, volunteer assistance mainly involved delivery of one-on-one technical assistance consultancies by American volunteers in less developed countries. Businesses in Latin America were the largest beneficiaries followed by those in Asia and Africa. Individual volunteers spent 1-3 months working side-by-side with host country firms, making significant improvements in their businesses, helping to create jobs and

building international good will.

With the fall of communism in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the development environment changed drastically. The Administration and Congress allocated substantial sums for the conversion of former Soviet bloc states to free market economies. At the same time, a number of new volunteer organizations sprang up to meet the increased need for business growth experts who could advise budding entrepreneurs and governments on how to start and operate private businesses. Economic growth budgets burgeoned and funds were spent both on projects using paid consultants and others using volunteers. However, this “bump” in USAID budgets began to decrease in the late 1990s as U. S. Government disappointment with the slowness in economic reforms in former Soviet countries and the graduation from assistance of Eastern bloc countries led to a gradual decline in USAID funds for that region.

Changes in the world since September 11, 2001 have led the U. S. Government to spend more foreign assistance in ongoing and post-conflict countries to help stabilize governments and to meet the immediate needs of people battered by years of conflict and poor government. With a few strategic exceptions, this has resulted in budget cuts, USAID staff reductions and Mission closings both in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as in many of the developing countries formerly receiving most of USAID’s assistance. While health and democracy-building funds may have increased in some of these countries, there has been a marked downturn in economic growth budgets.

These changes have forced USAID service providers, including both contractors and international business volunteer organizations to adapt to new, more stringent, “results-oriented” program standards. Business volunteer organizations have adapted to the changes with a new, flexible and innovative design, management and implementation methodology that has enabled them to more effectively address USAID economic growth strategies.

1.3 Developing an Effective and Responsive Methodology

The new methodology developed features an integrated “team” or combination of resources to implement programs. Although volunteer experts continue to play a central role in the delivery of focused technical assistance and training, full-time paid program staffs ensure overall program management and continuity through paid long-term technical consultants and on-the-ground support for international and local volunteers. This integrated “team” methodology ensures that all program activities are closely monitored and all team members are held accountable, both individually and collectively, for meeting program objectives and delivering sustainable impacts.

1.4 Business Volunteer Programs in the 21st Century

This program implementation methodology has become the standard for members of the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) consortium, which was created in 2004 to allow USAID missions easy access to the resources of the 16 major U.S. volunteer organizations focused on economic growth. Today’s business volunteers provide technical help for periods of a week to a year, assisting specific industries, groups of firms, associations, research institutions, municipalities, and other actors in private sector development. Programs implemented cover a wide range of assistance, including, inter alia, privatization of state enterprises, municipal development, industry exchange programs, trade show assistance, information technology support, export development, business skills training programs, agricultural improvement, financial system development, association & cooperative assistance, grants programs, policy development & implementation, MSME direct consulting, and business environment surveys.

1.5 Dispelling Some Myths About Current International Business Volunteer Programs

Myth #1: “All business volunteers are retired executives with out-of-date knowledge”

The word “retired” is no longer applicable to today’s business volunteers. The great majority of volunteers deployed are not retirees. Neither are their skills outdated. In fact, to qualify as volunteers with the major business volunteer organizations, candidates must meet the same professional standards required by for-profit consulting firms. In fact, many paid international consultants begin their careers by volunteering for business development programs. Before registration in the various organizational databases, applicants’ credentials and references are carefully screened and verified to ensure they are current with their industries or professions. Because most registered business volunteers are still working, many take lengthy sabbaticals from their jobs, use periods between assignments, and take vacation time in order to serve on overseas program teams.

Every business volunteer selected for overseas assignments must have a superb career track record. He or she must be have current senior level managerial experience, be a sector-specific consultant or mid-career professional, or be an early retiree who is still actively involved in his or her industry.

Myth #2: *Business Volunteers Are Not Accountable*

In the past, business volunteer assistance programs were sometimes criticized as being too costly relative to the economic growth impacts achieved through one-on-one short-term, episodic assignments. In effect, a lack of management oversight by lead organizations did not always ensure accountability for results. That criticism is no longer valid. All members of the implementation team have stakes in ensuring successful program implementation. Like their paid resident and short-term consultant colleagues, each volunteer is held accountable for successful completion of both individual and team performances. The lead organization, in turn, is responsible to the donor agency and program beneficiaries for team performance and overall program success.

Myth #3: *“Business Volunteers Are Free”*

As with other international volunteer programs, although there is no cost for the labor of volunteers there are costs associated with the work of selecting, placing and managing the volunteers. For any given assignment, organization staff work to find the practitioner most appropriate to meet the needs/tasks of each assignment, ensuring a fit with the program strategy and that the volunteer is ready to “hit the ground running” by preparing background material and handling logistics of the assignment. Once a volunteer has been assigned, continuing program funds cover the travel, per diem, incidental and lodging costs for each volunteer (unlike some volunteer programs in the past, volunteer organizations operate like their for-profit counterparts and no longer encourage or offer to cover the travel costs of spouses). Relatively short-term assignments are designed to be as effective as possible, however, since marginal costs for volunteers are dependent almost solely on lodging and per diems, longer term integration into implementation activities increases the efficiency and cost effectiveness.

2. The Added Value to USAID from Using Business Volunteer Organizations to Implement Economic Growth Programs

Successful economic growth programs require highly professional implementation teams with specialized skills and experience. The successes of volunteer providers in delivering USAID economic growth programs can be attributed to the quality of their program teams. The program teams are characterized by a complementary combination of volunteer and paid-service suppliers led by experienced professional managers. This approach helps ensure appropriate resource allocation, management oversight and accountability. The cost effectiveness of volunteer programs can best be demonstrated over the long-term. As stated above, the front end cost of volunteer programs outweigh actual implementation cost, which are limited to the volunteers per diem, travel and lodging. Therefore, repeat use of volunteers and long-term integration into program activities increases impacts and cost effectiveness. This supports an approach of incorporating volunteer organizations as early as possible into program planning and development.

2.1 Business Volunteer Implementation Teams Deliver a Cost-Effective Mix of Expertise and Assistance Services

Integrating volunteer and paid professional services maximizes team resources by enabling the design and delivery of a broad, coordinated portfolio of expertise customized to the needs of program beneficiaries — from individual entrepreneurs, small or medium-sized local business, professional associations and government entities, both national and local.

Projects can utilize a combination of the following types of volunteers and paid consultants:

- Professional, paid, resident staff management and technical experts,
- U. S. and other international business volunteers (practitioners and technical experts and their extended networks of industry and professional colleagues),
- Young professionals (recent MBAs, mid-career ICT experts),
- Host country volunteers,
- Local consultants (host country or regional), and
- Members of various Diaspora groups.

The specific mix of the team depends on the goals, strategies, and designs of specific program results. Desired project results direct program designs and determine resource needs and implementation teams. The optimal time for economic growth officers to incorporate the use of volunteers into program designs is during the development of specific project scopes of work. Balancing the use of both voluntary and paid expertise in a coordinated strategy allows volunteer-focused programs to provide cost-effective assistance to a large number of beneficiaries. While the ultimate cost for a program or activity is determined by the mix of experts and volunteers, using an approach which leverages the long-term value offered by volunteers through the life of a project can increase the cost effectiveness of a program.

Fostering a Sustainable Source of Assistance within Sudan

VEGA's Agricultural Market and Enterprise Development (AMED), using Sudanese Diaspora volunteers from the U. S. extensively have provided:

- Technical assistance to more than 3,500 individuals, 122 small and micro enterprises
- 37 local institutions, 7 cooperatives and 2 business associations strengthened
- Helped form a Chamber of Commerce, attracting 200 small business owners
- Assisted several government ministries reform or establish new trade and agricultural policies.

2.2 Business Volunteers Generate both Short and Long-Term Impacts

Volunteer team members generate both immediate and long-term impacts. Volunteers are available for both short-and long-term assignments and often extend short-term assignments, if necessary, to complete program objectives. Some impacts will not be measurable until long after completion of a short-term assignment by a volunteer or consultant team member. Therefore, an important benefit of the integrated team approach is the continuity provided by paid, professional and technical staff and longer-term volunteers who continually monitor and evaluate program services, client progress, and economic results throughout the life of the program.

Two important value-added benefits volunteers bring to economic growth programs is a dedication to host country “clients” and a willingness and flexibility to adapt their time to program needs. In addition to completing short-term and longer-term projects during the life of a program, the majority of volunteers will also extend their overseas assignments if evolving program situations require.

Most program volunteers, regardless of the length of their in-country assignments, stay engaged with both program staff and/or client beneficiaries long after they return to the U.S. Working from their homes, volunteers frequently provide valuable, on-going assistance to program beneficiaries by email, telephone or travel within the U.S. that supports achievement of program and client objectives.

2.3 Use of Local and Regional Expertise Contributes to the Long-Term Sustainability of Program Goals

• Diaspora and Regional Volunteers

Diaspora and/or regional volunteers participating on program teams help establish and foster a culture of volunteerism within host countries. Diaspora volunteers can serve as examples of success for beneficiaries and can provide breakthroughs based on their knowledge of local language and culture that may not be achieved with U. S. or third-country national experts. They may be especially valuable in training and trade development programs. In the former, their linguistic and cultural skills can help with understanding particularly difficult concepts or in breaking down barriers to understanding between U. S. and third-country nationals. In trade development, Diaspora volunteers very often have contacts in their home community that can be invaluable in assisting an entrepreneur, for example, in gaining a foothold in a new market.

Business Volunteers Continue to Help After Assignments

- *Preparing strategic plans, business plans, loan and grant applications;*
- *Conducting market research and identifying the best sources of business inputs, technologies, and equipment;*
- *Participating in trade shows, including introductions to potential buyers or suppliers*
- *Tapping into their personal and professional networks to link with and arrange meetings with potential investors or joint-venture partners;*
- *Organizing and managing U.S. study tours*
- *Providing ongoing assistance and recommendations to overcome obstacles that their hosts encounter, e.g., related to production processes or management practices*

One of the great values added to economic growth programs by volunteer organizations is the extent of their experience in international economic development and the contacts available to them regionally. They are able to use these regional contacts to provide services or to assist in finding a service provider. Regional advisors, whether volunteer or paid, can provide rapid startup through their knowledge of regional and local development programs and, since they do not have as far to travel, may be available with shorter lead times.

- **Collaboration with Other International Volunteer Organizations**

VEGA members have effectively used volunteers from prior programs in former USAID recipient countries or organizations to help in other parts of the world. For instance, volunteers from Eastern Europe have been extraordinarily effective working in the Middle East and South Asia to help those regions move from command to market economies. With their first-hand knowledge of and experience negotiating the difficulties of privatization and reform, Eastern Europeans have valuable lessons to share.

Additionally, over the years, many international business volunteer organizations designed on an American model have emerged. Through collaborative arrangement with organizations such as the Senior Executive Services based in Europe, thousands more international volunteers are available and have been used to assist USAID programs. In an example from another part of the world, American volunteers teamed with Australian Business Volunteers to design and implement a program to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on micro and small businesses in Papua New Guinea.

2.4 Business Volunteer Organizations Make Effective Partners

USAID Economic Growth programs can benefit from partnerships between for-profit and non-profit firms by capitalizing on the strengths of both entities, leveraging resources and enhancing the probability of achieving sustainable impacts cost-effectively. For-profit and non-profit organizations increasingly recognize the value of establishing partnerships with business volunteer organizations when responding to USAID procurement solicitations, providing access to thousands of experts in virtually all industry sectors and proven experience as implementers of USAID programs.

Business volunteer organizations, such as members of VEGA, benefit from partnering with for-profit firms (local and U.S.) when responding as prime bidders on procurements. Offering access to both paid and volunteer consultants is a principle feature of the current program methodology of almost all volunteer organizations. In both instances, partnerships between volunteer organizations and for-profit or non-profit colleagues increase the depth of resources each is able to bring to any competitive bid.

Russian & US Volunteers Collaborated on USAID FOREST Project

A VEGA member organization implemented a \$17 million USAID/Russia-funded Forest Resources and Technologies (FOREST) Project (2000-2006). As part of several economic growth strategies, FOREST included technical assistance from 120 Russian volunteer experts and 64 US volunteers. Volunteers provided business, management, and HR training, enabling SMEs to increase profits, offer new goods and services, penetrate new markets, and introduce new technologies. As a result, companies were successful in attracting \$772,350 of new financing. In addition, 96 SMEs that received sector-specific consultation reported an increase in profits of at least ten percent through cost savings and/or value-added returns.

The list of for-profit firms, not-for profit organizations and government agencies that have or are currently partnering on major programs with VEGA member volunteer organizations includes but is not limited to: Academy for Educational Development (AED), Aid to Artisans, Associates in Rural Development (ARD), BearingPoint, Beyster Institute (BI), Booz-Allen Hamilton, Carana Corporation, Chemonics, DAI, Deloitte Touche, FLAG International, IBM, Pragma, World Vision, Department of State, Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense and Department of Commerce.

2.5 Approaches to Using Volunteer Organizations in Economic Growth Programs.

Resources needs are driven by the desired program result and available funding. Implementation teams are ultimately reflective of program designs and activity priorities determined as a result of program assessments, previous project evaluations and new program designs. Optimal team configurations that include a mix of volunteers and consultants, in both long and short term roles, should seek to encourage partnering arrangements between for-profit and not-for profit firms early in program design and implementation. Suggested approaches include:

- Encouraging and/or requiring the use of volunteers in team configurations in procurement solicitations.
- Designing collaborative programs using a mix of procurement vehicles, e.g., RFPs, RFAs, IQCs and LWAs.
- Designing add-on activities that require the use of volunteers to RFPs

Achieving better results with limited resources requires planning and flexibility. Lessons learned indicate that programs which identify the appropriate blend of resources needed in team configurations early on will have a higher success of team integration and be able to respond more quickly to changing needs.

3. Business Volunteer Organizations Support U.S. Foreign Assistance Policies and Programming Priorities

For more than 40 years, American business volunteers have answered the call from the U.S. Government foreign assistance agencies to contribute their time and talents to promote economic growth in countries around the world.

3.1 Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP)

Although deployed principally through government-funded programs, American business volunteers have been referred to as “shirt-sleeve ambassadors” because of their generous contributions of practical assistance and technical help improving the economic conditions of individuals and governments in host countries. In 2003, to further capitalize on the success and willingness of Americans to volunteer their time, skills, and experience, and to expand access to expert business assistance in the developing world, President Bush signed an Executive Order announcing Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP). That Order states that, “The investment of federal resources to enable U.S. volunteers to work with nongovernmental and voluntary service organizations overseas is a preferred use of our resources and also will help leverage private sector resources.”

3.2 Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA)

In concert with the Executive Order on Volunteerism, USAID established the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) in 2004. Established under a Leader with Associates (LWA) cooperative agreement, VEGA allows USAID missions easy access to the professional resources of the world's largest consortium of economic growth volunteer organizations. The experts available to participate in VEGA programs represent practitioners in virtually every industry and profession — including, but not limited to, successful entrepreneurs, agricultural enterprise managers & owners, CEOs of multinational firms, former U.S. cabinet members, computer programmers, and dairy farmers. VEGA can provide EG programs with the cost benefits of non-profits and pro bono service of an unequalled number of professional practitioners and technical experts. The focused expertise of VEGA volunteers is carefully matched to overall program goals and the specific needs of beneficiaries to ensure achievement of measurable and sustainable impacts.

Today, the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) is comprised of over 16 leading economic growth volunteer organizations that collectively represent a resource of 67,000 volunteer experts available to help promote economic growth in developing, transition and post-conflict economies. A number of VEGA members implement the *John Ogonowski Farmer-to-Farmer (FtF)* program in 38 countries around the world. FtF was launched in 1985 by the Commerce Department and is one of the most successful business volunteer programs (see www.usaid.gov/our_work/agriculture/farmer_to_farmer.htm), consistently producing measurable, sustainable results. EGAT published a manual on *Managing International Volunteer Programs*, based on more than 20 years of FTF experience (see http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNADC356.pdf). Through this and other programs, members of the VEGA consortium have demonstrated their ability to deliver major economic growth programs in a variety of environments. As of May 2008, VEGA has been awarded seventeen Associate Awards in seventeen countries valued at over \$61 million.

3.3 Presidential Initiatives

Concurrent with the launch of VEGA, several new Presidential Initiatives under VfP were announced and funding was made available to integrate the skills and experience of business volunteers into new economic growth programs. Several members of the VEGA consortium were tapped to play key roles in programs designed specifically to support those initiatives. Examples include:

- *Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI)*
ICT volunteers participate in this public-private partnership to promote the economic growth of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the developing world through ICT.
- *Trade for African Development and Enterprise (TRADE)*
This initiative utilizes export and trade promotion volunteers as well as technical experts to help African enterprises take advantage of increased trade opportunities with the United States provided by the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).
- *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)*
In a unique, integrated approach to prevention, treatment and care, combating the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, volunteers are assisting micro and small enterprises

VEGA Volunteers

More than **67,000 business volunteers and technical experts** representing the 16 members of the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) have already promoted economic growth in over 140 countries.

Since 2004, business volunteers working on VEGA programs have contributed more than 7,500 days of service valued at over \$3.2 million.

plan for and survive the impact of the HIV and AIDS on their employees, families and communities.

- *Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)*
Managed by the State Department, several VEGA members, both through VEGA and independently, are supporting economic, political, and educational reform efforts in the Middle East, including key support to modernize and reform the financial sector, making it a more effective contributor to economic development.

Annex: Business Volunteer Programs Address Critical Economic Growth Strategies Identified By USAID

The following table provides examples of the integrated assistance corresponding to USAID EG strategies delivered by programs implemented or being implemented under the Leader with Associates cooperative Agreement between USAID and Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA).

USAID Enterprise and Economic Growth Strategies	Examples of VEGA Volunteer Programs Implemented 2004-2008
Improve Productivity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input markets: improvements in access for key inputs • Land and water: agricultural production and efficiency; infrastructure services. • Labor: work force development for promising clusters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Agricultural Market and Enterprise Development (AMED) in Sudan is working to achieve comprehensive economic recovery and growth in the presently fragile state of the southern Sudan. Agricultural related assistance activities provided by professional staff, U.S. volunteers, regional, local and Diaspora volunteers include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct support to private enterprises and producers; 2. Capacity building in agricultural and natural resources systems; 3. Support to governmental and non-governmental agencies that must facilitate recovery; and, 4. Assistance to the GOSS in strengthening its economic policies and support systems.
Improve Access to Markets Examples of strategies/tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity assessments at firms • Benchmarking against anchor firms or lead investors • Linking sales opportunities to restructuring costs within firms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Business Trade Development (BTD) program focused on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducting needs and capacity assessments in target sectors (particularly ICT, Tourism, BSOs) 2. Building effective BSOs that can, on a market-driven basis, provide a combination of general and industry-specific technical/managerial services and training to support the long-term growth of small and medium-sized enterprises 3. Helping BSOs acquire the expertise required to meet the service needs of the SME clients through <i>volunteer experts, local consultants, and long-term MBA advisors</i>. 4. Offering technical assistance and training to help BSOs identify the needs of client firms and to develop an appropriate mix of fee-based services to respond to market demand. • VEGA Export Trade Training (ETT) program is designed to assist the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in producing successful trade agreements between the U.S. and Bahrain and the U.S. and Morocco. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Using volunteers and local consultants and professional staff 2. Identifying entrepreneurs with export ready firms and providing them

	<p>with the tools necessary to market their products overseas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Africa Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA +) operated under the broader trade initiative AGOA. This program developed and promoted Ethiopia's export market to the United States and other international markets by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disseminating information to Ethiopian business regarding AGOA opportunities; 2. Creating and strengthening business linkages between Ethiopian businesses and the Diaspora community in the U.S.; 3. Holding and participating in a series of trade and reverse trade missions for products with a competitive advantage. <p>Managed by local professional staff, the program utilized both long and short-term US and regional volunteers, including an MBA Advisor, to provide technical assistance in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diaspora coordination 2. Export promotion 3. Trade show support and 4. Information and communications technology.
<p>Improve Access to Business Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information on markets, technology, and business; technical assistance and management training through wholesale brokers and retail providers; business-to-business services for marketing, management consulting, auditing and accounting, market research, packaging and design; support services from government agencies, etc • Transport: upgraded services for cold storage, logistics, roads, ports, packaging, etc. <p>Examples of strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and work with selected firms that share costs, invest, and have growth opportunities • Broker commercial linkages between growth enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Business Trade Development (BTD) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building effective Business Support Organizations (BSOs) that can, on a market-driven basis, provide a combination of general and industry-specific technical/managerial services and training to support the long-term growth of small and medium-sized enterprises 2. Helping BSOs acquire the expertise required to meet the service needs of the SME clients through <i>volunteer experts, local consultants, and long-term MBA advisors</i>. 3. Offering technical assistance and training to help BSOs identify the needs of client firms and to develop an appropriate mix of fee-based services to respond to market demand. • VEGA Accessing Markets for Economic Development (AMED) in Sudan is working to achieve comprehensive economic recovery and growth in the presently fragile state of the Southern Sudan. In addition to agricultural capacity building activities provided by professional staff, U.S. volunteers, regional, local and Diaspora volunteers include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Direct support to private enterprises and producers; 2. Support to governmental and non-governmental agencies that must facilitate recovery; 3. Assistance to the GOSS in strengthening its economic policies and

	<p>support systems; and</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Drawing upon the skills and participation of the Southern Sudan's Diaspora to assist in economic development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Long-Term Business Advisers (LTBA) program leverages the business management knowledge and technical expertise of recent graduate student volunteers to provide long-term technical assistance in support of USAID Mission program needs. Countries assisted included: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Armenia, Jordan, Mexico, Indonesia 2. (Office of Microenterprise Development) in Ecuador, Guyana, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Philippines and Zambia • VEGA Private Sector Development Initiative (PSDI) in Iraq <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promoted provided business training and other business support services to Iraqi entrepreneurs. 2. Trained by American volunteers, Iraqi professionals, provided training, consulted for businesses in 10-20 targeted industry groups, and trained medium and large-size enterprises in winning procurement and consulting services contracts 3. Developed business tool kits to serve as self-training devices for micro and small entrepreneurs.
<p>Improve Access to Capital Examples of strategies/tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and work with innovating financial services firms • Broker commercial linkages between growth enterprises and financial service providers • Assess opportunities to upgrade financial services for growth industries (e.g. agricultural credit, export insurance, etc.) • Pilot and test financial innovations (e.g., risk sharing, insurance, guarantees) • Support advocacy for financial sector reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VEGA Cyprus Partnership for Economic Growth (CEPG) Volunteers and local consultants delivered services through this program. The objective of the program was to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the US Government's facilitation of the reunification of the island by supporting economic growth in the Turkish Cypriot Community (TCC) 2. Provide island-wide economic interaction 3. Train bankers to develop new financing products for SMEs • VEGA South African APS Grants Administration (SAAGA) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manages USAID/South Africa's small-grants program in support of the Mission's Market-Driven Employment Generation initiative. 2. Staff and volunteers involved in the program evaluate the applications received in response to the USAID APS; execute, manage and monitor the grant awards; and compile, report and disseminate data that reflects progress toward each grant's targeted results.

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